

DEQ to hold public meetings on Roanoke River PCB study

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2009

Contact: Bill Hayden
(804) 698-4447
william.hayden@deq.virginia.gov

RICHMOND, VA. -- The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality will hold public meetings July 29 and 30, to seek public comment on the draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report for Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in the Roanoke River watershed.

During the meetings, DEQ will discuss monitoring efforts and conclusions from a study of PCBs in the Roanoke River watershed. During several years of fish tissue collection in the watershed ranging from Montgomery County to Roanoke County, and then from Bedford County to Halifax County, DEQ has found fish contaminated with elevated levels of PCBs. These high PCB levels have led the Virginia Department of Health to issue fish consumption advisories.

The public meetings will focus on the PCB sources contributing to contaminated fish tissue for the Upper Roanoke and Lower Roanoke (Staunton) River watersheds. The Upper Roanoke River watershed meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 29, at 7 p.m. at the DEQ Blue Ridge Regional Office conference room located at 3019 Peters Creek Rd., Roanoke. The Lower Roanoke (Staunton) River watershed meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 30, at 7 p.m. at the Brookneal Elementary School gymnasium located at 1330 Charlotte St., Brookneal.

In the Upper Roanoke River watershed, the study indicates that high concentrations of PCBs are found in the City of Roanoke between Memorial Avenue Bridge and Walnut Avenue Bridge. The study also indicates that the majority of the PCB contamination entering the Lower Roanoke (Staunton) River watershed originates from the Altavista area. Sources of PCBs include point source dischargers, storm water runoff from areas of known contamination, and existing instream bottom sediments. DEQ will continue to investigate potential PCB sources.

The Upper Roanoke River watershed impaired segments are located in Montgomery County, Roanoke County, Salem City, Roanoke City and Bedford County. The Lower Roanoke (Staunton) River watershed impaired segments are located in Bedford County, Campbell County, Charlotte County, Halifax County and Pittsylvania County.

A TMDL is the maximum amount of a pollutant a water body may contain and still meet water quality standards. To restore water quality, PCBs will have to be reduced to the amount specified by the TMDL.

The draft TMDL will be available online at
<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/TMDLDataSearch/DraftReports.aspx>.
The public comment period closes Thursday, Aug. 27, 2009.

PCBs are chemicals that were used in electrical transformers and other equipment until the late 1970s and can remain in the environment for decades. The Virginia Department of Health recommends that pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers, infants and young children should avoid eating PCB-contaminated fish from advisory areas. A full list of waters and fish affected by the advisories is available on the health department's website at www.vdh.virginia.gov.